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who can afford to use European soap[1] delight to do so, and laundry work, in particular ironing, is considered a fashionable employment and one that is a mark of wealth and status. As such, it is chiefly in the hands of the men, many of whom learn to iron in domestic service. The husbands as the wage-earners are in any case considered sole owners of both their own and their wives' clothes,[2] and when the young man can acquire a bit of soap he likes to wash and iron in public outside his hut, surrounded by an admiring crowd of small boys. Thus the washing of clothes is women's work in the old-fashioned villages, but a male occupation under more modern conditions.

Women care for their children devotedly, but rarely give up any time to them exclusively. Babies are washed with warm water and massaged each morning and fed with gruel twice a day (cf. p. 69), but otherwise they are slung on their mothers' backs wherever they go—to work or to a beer-drink—but are not definitely 'amused' for any period of time or taken for walks. Small sisters do most of the work of supervising the younger children, and thus relieve the mothers.

Preparation of Meals.

If the housework proper, as we have described it, is not a very heavy drain on a woman's time, the preparation of meals and all the associated activities are far longer and more complicated than in our society. Wood for the fire has to be collected daily, or every two days, and this is woman's work. A man fetches wood for his chief, or for a European when required to. For his wife he will only cut down a suitable tree stem on the way back from gardening, and leave it for her to pick up on her return. She usually carries a bundle of dried wood six to eight feet long on her head. When a village is newly built dry firewood is plentiful near home, but in two or three years' time the supply is almost exhausted and the phrase 'she has gone for firewood' (*Aya ku nkuni*) may mean an expedition of an hour or so. On the copper belt the problem has already become acute and well-paid Africans employ servants to gather their wood, or try to buy faggots in the native market —one of the causes of the great increase in the cost of living in urban areas.

[1] This practically only occurs in the neighbourhood of a white store.

[2] He wears her clothes whenever he likes, and I have seen men strip their wives as a dramatic gesture in a quarrel threatening to lead to divorce.

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If a trunk is too wide to be swarmed, a narrow pole is cut from the surrounding bush and slanted up against it, or the climber may choose to swing by his arms like a monkey from a convenient bough in a neighbouring tree.

All Bemba are exceedingly neat and deft with an axe (*isembe*).[1] Each axe-head is fixed at an angle of about 45° through a slit drilled with red-hot iron in a knobbed holder (*umupini*) about 2 feet long. A man never parts with his axe. He carries it everywhere with him swung over his shoulder as he walks.[2] At the beginning of each tree-cutting season the axe-blades are reforged by native smiths, who heat the iron white-hot in a charcoal fire blown with skin bellows, and hammer it out to a new fine cutting edge. During a morning's work the axes are constantly rubbed on stones, often between the cutting of each tree. The blade is thus kept very sharp, and when the shaft is held at the right angle, it will sever a branch from the trunk with two or three deft slashes from alternate sides. I have seen a man clear a good-sized tree of branches in ten minutes in this way, and at the tree-cutting season the bush resounds with the blows of axes and the splintering of wood. Heavy boughs crash as they fall through the undergrowth beneath. At the top of the tree the work becomes more and more dangerous. A man may be left standing on a fork at the summit with one of the vertical stems as yet uncut. He has to clasp it with one hand to steady himself, while with the other he slashes at the trunk he is clinging to. He swings his axe till he hears the warning crack and feels the branch sway. Then he slides his body quick as a flash down the mutilated stump of the tree, yelling in triumph as he hears the bough fall.

Every year two or three deaths occur during the tree-cutting. Other men are disabled through falls. The Bemba recognize the work as dangerous, and we have seen that they delay the clearing of the bush until their strength is at its maximum (p. 50); until they have recovered from the effects of a beer-drink (p. 18); or until the weather is warm so that their hands do not slip on the axe-handle.

[1] Axe-heads appear to have been among the few implements which the Bemba smiths knew how to forge. Most axes are still made by native smiths, although more often than not, with European iron, stolen or bought. Only a few are bought at the stores.

[2] As a proverb illustrating parental affection the Bemba say, 'A child is like a little axe. If it hurts you, you just throw it over your shoulder.' *Mwana, kasembe. Nelyo kakukoma, nakakobeka na pa kubea.*